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School Committee Minutes 01-22-2002

Arlington School Committee

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, January 22, 2002

6:00 PM

Present: *Joani LaMachia, Chair* *Suzanne Owayda*
 David McKenna, Vice-Chair *Paul Schlichtman*
 Denis Sullivan, Secretary *Martin Thrope*
 Barbara Goodman

Superintendent *Kay Donovan*
Asst. Supt. *Joanne Gurry*
Chief Financial Officer *David Kale*
Special Education Director *Marilyn Bisbicos*

Call To Order: 6:10

Budget Workshop

Chief Financial Officer David Kale gave a presentation on the initial FY2003 budget. Mr. Kale reported that the school is looking at \$940,000.00 in budget cuts. Mr. Kale handed out packets to the committee and reviewed:

- .. a draft summary of increases and decreases
- .. the draft reduction listing outlining a list of budget reallocations and reductions totaling \$920,977.00
- .. updated the grant list- \$2.6 million received to date
- .. reviewed FY02 proposed elementary classrooms staffing changes
- .. elementary class size
- .. AHS & Ottoson enrollment figures

Committee Members had questions on cutting positions, restructuring of the guidance department increased class size, the possibility of starting the Dallin School in January and if the extra transportation cost incurred could be covered as part of the state 63 percent construction reimbursement.

Ms. LaMachia stated the discussion of the budget would continue at the next meeting.

Ron Nigro Dedication Ceremony

Supt. Donovan, Chair Joani LaMachia, and AHS Alumni President Mary Winstanley-O'Connor honored the memory of Ron Nigro, founder of the AHS Alumni Association and generous benefactor of Arlington Public Schools. The ceremony was held at AHS in the Alumni corridor. Chair Joani LaMachia presented a plaque to Iris Nigro that will be part of the "hall of fame".

State Legislators

Representatives Jay Kaufman, Jim Marzilli and Anne Paulsen spoke to the school committee relative to the budget shortfall in the coming fiscal year. The representatives responded to questions from Committee Members on the constraints of proposition 2 ½, special education costs, and easier access to grant money. They acknowledged that Massachusetts is looking at difficult choices and the only hope of financial relief would be in the form of undoing the income-tax rollback. School Committee Members thanked the representatives for attending the meeting.

Public Participation

AHS parent Marvin Lewiton voiced his concerns relative to the retirement of a math teacher at the high school being replaced with a long-term substitute instead of a qualified teacher.

Mr. Thrope moved to suspend the rules to allow discussion on how we will resolve the issue presented-no second

Kindergarten teacher Camilla Lillibask read a letter on behalf of the kindergarten steering committee on the kindergarten entrance age policy. The steering committee requested that the wording on the policy eliminate the waiver and the procedure of the waiver process stating that it would add unnecessary work and puts undue pressure on preschools, parents, and principals. They asked that the language instead include that the "school committee strongly recommends" that a child reach the age of five before entering kindergarten.

Mr. Thrope requested a point of personal privilege. Chairperson LaMachia asked if Mr. Thrope could wait until later in the meeting.

Secretary's Report

Mr. Sullivan reviewed correspondence

Report on Subcommittees

“ **Curriculum & Instruction:** Ms. Goodman reported that the AHS program of studies would be on the agenda for the next meeting scheduled for February 5, at 7:30 PM.

The subcommittee also approved the district curriculum accommodation plan and brought it before the committee for a vote.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was unanimously

Voted to approve the district curriculum accommodation plan as amended.

“ **Community Relations:** the subcommittee voted to hold a public forum that outlines the school budget process. The panel will include chief financial officer David Kale, and representatives from the Finance Committee, the Board of Assessors, the Treasurer’s office and Representative Jay Kaufman. The forum is scheduled for Thursday, March 7th at 7:30 PM at the Ottoson Middle School.

“ **Policy & Procedures:** On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Ms. Owayda it was unanimously

Voted to approve policy EBAB Pest Management Policy

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously

Voted to approve policy JF –School Admissions

Mr. Thrope stated that he would like to set aside policy JEB-Entrance Age to revisit it and do further work with subcommittee, and that all interested parties meet with the subcommittee to work out language. Mr. Schlichtman emphasized that he was willing to tighten the language, but not to change the basic policy.

Report On Kindergarten Program (Half-day, Full-day)

Supt. Donovan explained that full day was started by a group of parents and teachers researching the feasibility of a full day program. The budget could not support a full day program and it was agreed that it could be offered only if supported by a program fee. The program fee began at \$1500.00, was reduced the next year to \$1200.00, and reduced again to \$500.00 last year and the current year.

Mr. Donovan reported that Arlington’s fee is one of the lowest at \$500.00; the average in the State is \$2000.00 with the highest at \$3,300.00. Mr. Sullivan suggested that the issue be referred to the curriculum and instruction subcommittee for review.

Superintendent's Report

Supt. Donovan reported that the goals subcommittee would have their final meeting on January 23rd. At that meeting they will agree on their goals and present them at a future meeting.

AHS Assistant Principal – Mrs. Donovan stated that there is one more interview to be conducted.

New Business

Mrs. Donovan informed committee members that we have hired a teacher who has taught math to replace Bob Committo who recently retired.

Ms. LaMachia made a proposal to form a budget subcommittee. She stated that it would help with some of the proposals and ideas dealing with the budget and would demonstrate to the public our commitment. It would also serve as a means to train the vice chair, who eventually presents the budget to Town Meeting.

On a motion by Mr. McKenna and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was

Voted to form an ad hoc committee on the budget and to report back to the full committee. 6-1

Ms. Goodman – no. Ms Goodman stated that the process is too important and that all school committee members must be informed and know all the details of the budget.

As a point of personal privilege Mr. Thrope stated that Ms. LaMachia’s remarks at the last meeting directed towards the AEA Reflector were stated as her own opinion and was not the opinion of the Arlington School Committee. Mr. Thrope stated that his opinion as to whether or not the comments made in the Reflector were in poor taste, he believed that they were indicative of a serious management problem that must be confronted.

On a motion made by Mr. Sullivan and seconded it was unanimously voted to adjourn @ 10:35 PM